

The Curtain-Lecture :

OR, A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Mr. Higgins and his Lady,

The NIGHT of his *LANDING*.

Very Necessary for the Understanding of all the SERMONS
he did, or ever will, Preach at any time.

10. Sept. 1707.

L. Well, dear *Frank*, I can't forgive you, you heard how ill I was of the Cholick, and wou'd not come near me, tho you know no body can cure me but your self. *H* Really I was as much troubled to hear of your Illness, as if you had been my Mother. *L.* As if I had been your Mother? that's kind indeed! am I not your Wife? Is not a Wife nearer than a Mother? *H.* Yes, when she has all the Fundamentals of a Wife; but when these fail, she is in Nature no more than an old Acquaintance, or Mother. *L.* Or Mother! I hate that Name: and you have long taught me to hate it, and I shall hate you if you call me so. I am still your Wife, and will be your Wife, and have all the Fundamentals of a Wife: I can hug you, and love you, and — if you bea't kind — I can pinch and scold — you know I can, *Frank* — I have not chang'd my Sex; I am still what I was. *H.* So it seems, but I am a new Man, and have quite renounc'd the Flesh; I heretofore liv'd with you in mortal Sin; I might as well have married my Mother. God forgive me, I will never do it more. *L.* Fine Doctrine indeed! a Man with his Wife live in mortal Sin. *H.* Yes Madam, when a Woman is past Child-bearing, 'tis a mortal Sin. *L.* A tender-conscienc'd Gentleman! Does your Conscience prick you at last? you was not so straight lac'd before you got all into your hands: if you had, I had never settl'd what I have upon you and given it from my Child'ren. *H.* You have given me but a Child's Portion, I will be your Child still. *L.* No you shan't. I hate the Name of a Mother, I am still your Wife. dear *Frank* — *H.* O Madam lie further, 'tis a damning Sin, I have consulted the Divines of *London* in that and other Cases, and they say plainly 'tis Incest. *L.* But that will never satisfy my Conscience, I am still your Wife, and will do my Duty; they are your High-Church Divines, I warrant you, that tell you so; they'll ruin us all with their Jesuitical Tricks: what, part Man and Wife! 'Tis they have kept you so long from me — such Men I fear will bring you to the Pillory. *H.* I am contented to suffer, rather than act against my Conscience. *L.* You act against your Conscience; that is, *Frank*, then do your Duty, and serve your Cure. *H.* I must obey the Church; he that does what the Church forbids, is guilty of Mortal Sin. *L.* What Church do you mean? I know no Church but the Church of *Rome* that requires a Clergy-man to forsake his Wife; I'm afraid you are turning Papist, *Frank* I'll tell the Parliament, that I will; look you to it. *H.* No Madam, I'm of the true Church of *England*

as by Law Establish'd; I have suffer'd a great deal for her, and I am ready to suffer more rather than disobey her. *L.* What! does the Church of *England* require a Man to lay aside his Wife? *H.* Yes, when she is past Child-bearing. *L.* I'm sure it was not so when I was in *England*; I suppose you mean the High-Church. *H.* Yes, that's the true Church. *L.* The true Church, and forbid a Man — God bless me, and preserve me my Senses, I will never be of that Church while I live. *H.* Are you not for the Common-Prayer-Book? *L.* Yes, I love the Common-Prayer-Book with all my Heart; there you are bid to love and cherish your Wives — I'm sure I read it this Morning; and remember, *Frank*, with my Body I thee worship: what's the Meaning of that, *Frank*? — Upon your Knees, and ask Blessing. — *H.* Ay, Madam, but the *Rubrick*, you have not read as I have; the *Rubrick* is an Act of Parliament; and 'tis dangerous breaking an Act of Parliament: I'll say that for my self, I believe I understand the *Rubrick* and the *Canons* as well as most Divines; I'll shew you in the Morning a Gown made according to the *Canon*, such a Gown as you ne'r saw since you lost your first Tooth. *L.* Ay, what new-fashion'd Gown is that? what do your Clergymen bring in new Fashions, you are the proudest conceited Men in the World; I hear you wear Muffs, and Patches too: I was told the other Day our Reader got a Cat's Paw, and scratch'd his upper Lip with it, for a Pretence to put a Patch upon it? and that another pawn'd his Surplice in the College for Money to buy a Ring. *H.* You Women are the most censorious Creatur's in the World; you think that is Pride; 'tis nothing but Cleanliness and Decency: I tell you, when I was a Young Man, I could never keep my Fingers clean before I got a Ring, for no Dirt will stick to Gold. But Madam, as to the Gown, we High-church Men are resolv'd to conform exactly to the *Canons*, and we have reassum'd this Gown, to distinguish us from the Slutish Whigs; besides, this Gown is made more convenient than the other: You know, Madam, the Tip of the Elbow is the most shapely Part about Man or Woman; but this being without the Sleeve is open to the View of all Persons, as is the Sleeve of our Callocks which we generally face with some Rich Silk or Velvet; and lastly, of all the Beauties, Ornaments and Graces of the Arms and Hands; these Sleeves are never dipt in the Plates and Dishes which we reach over, to carve for our selves or others; and also, if we happen to be

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surprised to play with the Ladies we presently slip the Cards, or Doctors, into our sleeves, before they are seen; but the prettiest use that I ever made of 'em, is a playing with the young Girls, I slip their Heads into my Sleeves; for we observe that when we get a Girls Head into a Poke, she's as safe as a Rabbit with her Head in the Hole and don't care a Farthing what becomes of her Scut. *L.* A very convenient Sleeve I swear! I'll try how you do it to-morrow tho' it be Sunday.— But dear *Frank*, I am troubled at Conscience about the Rubrick, I shall think the worse of the Common-Prayer-Book while I live, if there be any such thing in it as you say. *H.* 'Tis true, indeed Madam, and I would no more break the Rubrick than the Ten Commandments. *L.* But they say the Common-Prayer-Book is to be alter'd in several places.— *H.* God forbid; If I ever Consent to such an Alteration let my right hand forget her Coming, I would not have the least Tittle of it alter'd for — *L.* to be a Bishop p. *H.* No, not to be a Priest. *L.* That's a lie *Frank*, to my certain knowledge, under the Sheets be it spoken, — you would see it burnt as contentedly as your Dialogue, provided you was a Bishop, to have the Ladies visit you, and write to you, when any of your Clergy happen to be Sick — I know *Frank* you love that with all your heart, since the Lady *B.* — *m.* us'd to send for you to pray by her in the Cholick, — tho she was pass'd Child-bearing, but not Priest-tho she was pass'd Child-bearing, but not Priest-bearing. *H.* By the word of a Priest she never bore me. *L.* No more did I, that's a Jesuitical Oath, don't equivocate, was that Incest? But that was before you read the Rubrick *Frank*, but prithes *Frank* tell me, is the Rubrick *jure divino*? *H.* O! Yes, for Bishops and Presbyters are *jure divino*, and they have a Power *jure divino*, to meet together in Council or Convocation to make Rubricks, and therefore, when those Rubricks are made they are *jure divino*, besides they are Confirm'd by Act of Parliament. *L.* Why then sure these Rubricks are above the Bible, are they not? *H.* Yes by all means, for the Scriptures Authority is ours from the Church, but the Bishops and Presbyters are above the Church, and give Laws to it. *L.* Why then I perceive the greatest Sin of all is to disobey the Bishops. *H.* Certainly. *L.* Why then come on briskly *Frank*, a Cup of Incest can do you no harm. *H.* I swear I'll get out of Bed — don't I tell you, 'tis a damnable Sin. *L.* Why but *Frank*, can a Man be twice damn'd, have you consulted the Divines in that point. *H.* No, there was no need, I can satisfy my self, tho not you, 'tis enough to be once damn'd. *L.* Why then *Frank* you'll never be damn'd for any thing you may do henceforth. *H.* You think I am already damn'd? *L.* Why Faith *Frank*, all the World knows you have lived for many Years in open Contempt and Defiance of the Bishops. *H.* Don't mistake me Madam, no Mar! has a greater Devotion for the Bishops, I mean the true Bishops, such as are for Supporting the Church, as by Law Establish'd; as for the rest, they are only Bishops in Name, they have forfeited their Authority by going about to betray the Church. *L.* But is the Arch Bishop one of those, the Dissenters don't think him

so. *H.* What does he not strike at the Foundation of Christ's Church, Is he not robbing us of our Jurisdiction and Privileges? He that would pull down a part, would pull down the whole if he cou'd — Let 'em perish that have ill will at *Sion*; but we have provided against a Siege, according to the Methods we have taken, we can hold out Ten Years; and by that time I hope the Church will be out of all danger.

L. Well, now I see where the danger of the Church lies, those of Christ Church say the Church is in danger, because your Privileges and Jurisdiction is question'd. *H.* And for very good reason. *L.* But pray *Frank*, what would put the Church out of danger? *H.* Why I tell you, tho it be no Secret, if the Parliament would pass an Act that none but the High Churchmen should receive Titles, exercise Jurisdiction, and be admitted to Preferments. *L.* And if you might do with your Livings as you do with your Wives, make *Sine Cures* of 'em, and not be oblig'd to Preach, but as your *Vanity* or *Curiosity* lead you, and sometimes by stealth in other folks Chappels. *H.* Nothing of that is contrary to the Rubrick, Faculties and Dispensations are not only reasonable, but also necessary sometimes. *L.* And so is Matrimony to Women pass'd Child-bearing, nor do I believe the Rubrick any where forbids it. *H.* No? *L.* Where? *H.* Do you remember when we were Married? *L.* Very well. *H.* Did *B.* — read the Collect for the Procreation of Children? *L.* No, and I abus'd the old Fumbler for omitting it. *H.* That is it stings my Conscience, the Rubrick directs what he did, — that the Collect be omitted when the Woman is pass'd Child-bearing; but what we are not to pray for, that we shou'd by no means labour for, 'tis folly to use the means where we cannot reasonably hope to attain the end — mark that Madam. *L.* Now I find you have been amongst the Jesuits, that's down right Popery, no wonder the Dissenters say there's Popery in the Common-Prayer, I wish with all my heart, we had the same Law against Popery that they have in Sweden, I certainly will have such a Law for't, if I han't, no body else shall have the benefit of them, I'll inform against you, I know you are against the Succession, you are for a Lineal Descent, and not the Princesses — I heard you say it many a time, — yes, you shall loose 'em. *H.* To tell you plainly I don't fear any such Law, I have lost 'em already, if that will satisfy you. *L.* What your Ears (grope under his Night-cap.) *H.* No, I thank my Friends those are safe yet. *L.* What else, Have you lost your Notes? *H.* Yes my Notes. *L.* Why did the Fistula break out there at London. *H.* No, I have made my self an Eunuch for the Church's sake. *L.* Unkind, Cruel, Ungrateful Wretch, you are worse than a Turk or Jew. I shall die of the Cholick, yes, I shall die, I will never speak to you more. *H.* I beg your Blessing. *L.* No more than you give me yours — you are pass'd Grace.

The Gods above reward your Love — O hone, O hone.